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DECISIONS, DECISIONS, A UNIT ON DEDUCTION. IT RINGS TRUE, A UNIT ON PLAUSIBILITY. RHETORIC CURRICULUM IV, STUDENT VERSION.

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A STUDENT VERSION OF A CURRICULUM GUIDE ON RHETORICAL REASONING PROCESSES WAS DEVELOPED. TWO UNITS INVOLVING DEDUCTION AND PLAUSIBILITY WERE INCLUDED. LESSONS INVOLVING ASSUMPTIONS, PATTERNS OF DEDUCTIVE THINKING, FACTS, AND VALUE JUDGMENTS WERE INCLUDED IN THE UNIT ON DEDUCTION. THE UNIT ON PLAUSIBILITY GAVE THE STUDENT THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRY HIS HAND AT IMAGINATIVE WRITING IN WHICH HIS PROBLEM WAS TO MAINTAIN CREDIBILITY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF AN IMAGINED SITUATION. PROSE MODELS WERE SUPPLIED FOR BOTH SECTIONS. THE TEACHER VERSION IS ED 010 810. RELATED REPORTS ARE ED 010 129 THROUGH ED 010 160 AND ED 010 803 THROUGH ED 010 832. (GD)

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

DECISIONS, DECISIONS,
(A Unit on Deduction),

IT RINGS TRUE,
(A Unit on Plausibility).

Rhetoric Curriculum IV,
Student Version.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
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(A Unit on Deductive Reasoning)

Student Version

Lesson 1: Assumptions

Many times in life you will have to make decisions or help make decisions when you cannot run a laboratory test to find out certainly what is the best choice to make. You must use your judgment. Often people get together to talk about what is best to do and then either agree or take a vote and abide by the decision of the majority on the policy to follow. Either way of arriving at a policy means making choices.

Suppose that you were in the following situation and had to make a choice: The governor of your state has decided to honor the Most Useful Citizen of the community you live in. Your group is to make the final selection for your area, and you are to choose three people from the list of nominees. Here are the nominees from whom you are to select:

Mrs. Arthur Brown. She did not finish high school; she married and brought up five children and three adopted refugee children. When her family was small she opened a kindergarten in her home for children of working mothers and maintained it for five years. She led several Girl Scout troops, later worked with Cub Scouts as Den Mother. She has taught a Sunday School class for ten years and worked with the church program for young people. Since her children grew up she has worked with the Welfare Program and the Juvenile Court and has taken orphaned children or children under the care of the Court into her home for short periods until they could be placed in permanent homes. She conducts sewing classes for the YWCA.

Ralph Acres. He is a small business man who operates a cannery. He founded the local Association for the Encouragement of Small Businesses and is active on its policy board. In his cannery he follows the practice of employing local workers and buying fruits and vegetables from local producers. His company has developed a new process for preserving the vitamins in canned foods.

Richard Jordan III. He is a banker. He gives generously to charity and has endowed the city hospital. Fifteen years ago he created a fund to provide financial aid for students who would otherwise be unable to attend college. By authorizing loans he helped Mr. Acres to establish and develop his cannery.

James Haggett. He is an artist with a growing reputation, though his work is not nationally known. He painted the murals in the new municipal building and became so actively interested in the program for building a new home for retired persons that he donated his services to design and decorate the chapel.

Robert Adams. He is a young athlete who won two medals in the last Olympics for distance running. He was voted by his fellow athletes one of the best representatives of America in the group. When he toured Russia later, he made many friends and was well received by Russian officials in Olympic celebrations because of his modest manner and quiet friendliness. He has just returned from two years in the Peace Corps where his work in a small village in Pakistan was highly praised by Peace Corps administrators.

Dr. Mary Harper. She is a surgeon whose research in heart surgery led to a new operative technique that has saved many lives. She is currently devoting her time to a study of rheumatic fever and may be close to discovering an effective new treatment.

Amos Marshall. He is a historian and archaeologist, professor of ancient history in the state university. When he was on a Fulbright fellowship in Greece in 1960, he accompanied an archaeological expedition to Egypt and was responsible for locating an unexplored site of ruins. The findings of this expedition have opened new possibilities for the study of ancient civilizations.

Dorothy Trenton. She is unmarried, and is editor of the local newspaper, the Statesman, which she inherited from her uncle. She completely reorganized the paper and led various reform movements. Her efforts have been credited with bringing about the defeat of an entrenched political machine and the reform of the police department. Under her leadership the paper has led movements to bring about slum clearance and projects to beautify the city and the state.

Grant Beckman. He is a musician--a concert artist and composer. His best known works are piano concertos and two symphonies. He has also gained a local reputation for interpreting music to non-musicians (the general public) through lecture recitals in schools and on the local television programs.

Webster Jones. He is a high school physics teacher. For the past twelve years he has devoted his Saturdays to keeping the physics laboratory in the high school open for students who want to work on independent projects. A number of his students have been able to win scholarships partly as a result of his guidance and personal interest.

Think about these ten people and the honor that is to be granted. See if you can form any opinion about which three best deserve to be selected as Most Useful Citizens. Write down your tentative choices--or list the people in the order in which you think they should be chosen.

When a group has to make a decision about a problem as you do now, they often want to discuss the decision. Sometimes you can save time by asking various members of the group to present a part of the problem, or one point of view, so that you can be sure all sides of the question are considered. To make your choice of three people, you can hold a discussion that helps you look at each of the ten nominees in turn. Your teacher will help you arrange such a discussion. He or she will ask for volunteers or assign eleven members of the class to take part, one of the eleven to act as chairman. Each of the other ten will present the case of one of the persons nominated: one can explain why Mrs. Brown should or should not be among the three selected; someone else can express a judgment about James Austin, and so on. The speeches may be two or three minutes each, depending on the time you have; you should plan time at the end for members of the class not taking part in the discussion to ask questions. This kind of discussion is called a symposium.

You may want to ask some member of the class to be prepared to present a critique of the discussion after it is completed, and you will want to raise some questions before you begin about how each member of the class can contribute effectively to making the final decision, whether he is chairman, one of the speakers, or a listener who may have a question to raise. Here are some of the questions you may want to think about:

For the Chairman: What is the chairman's function in this kind of discussion? Should he recognize the speakers? Should he express any opinion himself? Should he recognize the people who want to ask questions?

For the Speakers: What point of view can the speaker take about the person he is considering? Has he more than one possibility? Can he take sides, recommending that the nominees he prefers be selected and that those he opposes not be chosen? Can he suggest both reasons for and reasons against? How can he make his position clear? How should he prepare what he wants to say? How important is it that he stay within his time limit? How can he be helped to use no more than his allotted time? Would a time keeper be a good idea? Where should the timekeeper sit?

For the Listeners: What should you listen for in the speeches? Should you make notes? write down questions to raise later? Should you write while the speaker is talking? When it is time for questions: Should you stand to ask your question? How should you begin your question--by mentioning at once the speaker to whom it is addressed? Can you make any suggestions about stating the question? What is the responsibility of the listeners?

Managing the Discussion: Where should the members of the symposium sit? Should they stand to speak? Where should the chairman sit?

After the symposium and the question period, you may want to think again about your own choice of three people to be honored. Review your list in the light of the judgments you have heard expressed. Has everybody agreed on the persons who should be chosen? If not, you may want to reflect about why opinions differ. Can you see any principles on which choices have been made? If differences have struck you, this might be a good time to consider the basis of choice. People make decisions because of what they believe is right. These beliefs on which you and everyone else base judgments may be called assumptions. Can you compile a list of the assumptions that members of the class seem to make? Does everyone in the class work from the same assumptions?

Before the class makes a final decision and takes a vote on the three persons who are to go to Washington, you might like to talk over the selection in a different kind of discussion. Again your teacher will help you organize it. From the members of the class who did not participate in the symposium he will appoint (or accept volunteers) a group of five or six to act as a panel, consider the views expressed, and recommend a decision. This group, too, will need a chairman. You have had experience before with small group or panel discussions, but you might want to review the function of the panel members, the chairman, and the listeners. How is the purpose now different? What duties does the chairman of this group have? What duties do the members

of the panel have? the listeners? This discussion should also allow time at the end for questions or comments from the rest of the class.

Now you are ready to vote. The chairman of the panel may call out the names on the list one at a time and ask you to raise your hand for each of the three you think should be honored. If three names receive a clear majority on the first vote, you have made a decision quickly. If not you may need to vote again on some of the list. Write on the board the names of those who do have a majority vote, and repeat the count for each of the others until you can agree on three. When you have been able to agree, your group has arrived at a decision on a difficult problem.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

You may find that you agree completely with the choice of the majority-- or you may disagree violently. In either case, you may want a chance to review your decision and express your own opinion. Decide whether you think the decision is wise according to your principles and write a paper that explains your view. You may want to state the assumptions on which you base your judgment, and you will of course want to give your reasons. If you disagree with any of the selections, turn in a minority report explaining why you think the group made a mistake. Whatever you conclude, you have thought through a problem; you have examined your assumptions, and you have reasoned to a conclusion.

Lesson 2: Patterns of Deductive Thinking

You have seen in the discussion you held in the first lesson that assumptions are important in arriving at decisions. When we try to understand what other people are saying, we must understand what assumptions they are making and we must understand our own assumptions. If we disagree with others (or they disagree with us), we can profit by checking the assumptions on which each one is basing his arguments.

In selecting the Most Useful Citizens to be honored you worked from assumptions about what kind of person is most useful to society, and what kind of service is more important than another kind. You may have believed, for example, that the most useful people are those who help young people. Or you may have believed that the most useful are those who contribute to art and culture. If you selected Mrs. Brown first as worthy of an award you may have been following a reasoning pattern like this:

The most useful citizens are those who help young people.

Mrs. Brown has helped young people more than any of the other nominees

Therefore Mrs. Brown should be chosen.

If you selected Robert Adams, the athlete, can you see what reasoning pattern you followed? How was your first statement different?

In every selection, you were doing deductive reasoning; you were putting together two assumptions and drawing an inference, or a conclusion. The assumptions you put together in such a pattern of reasoning are called premises.

I.

Deductive reasoning can follow several different patterns. In the example you have just examined, the first premise stated a general principle (The most useful citizens are those who help young people), and the second premise stated a particular instance that fitted the principle (Mrs. Brown helped young people more than any of the other nominees). The conclusion followed that what was true of the general principle was also true of the particular instance. In the kind of reasoning we must do constantly about everyday affairs, working from premises to conclusions is necessary. If we take care to examine carefully the assumptions (premises) we use and the relationships between them, we are better able to decide whether our conclusions are justified. First we must look at our assumptions to see what evidence they are based on. If the members of your class disagreed about the selection of people to be honored, they may have been reasoning from different assumptions, and the final decision depended on some sort of agreement in the group about which assumptions to accept as workable in making the choice.

Looking at some simple reasoning patterns may help you see how conclusions follow from related premises. What conclusions can you draw from each of these sets of premises? (Do not write the answers in this book. Put them on a separate sheet of paper.)

- A. All the members of this class are sophomores.

John is a member of this class.

Therefore John

- B. Each member of the class is a sophomore.

John is a member of this class.

Therefore John . . .

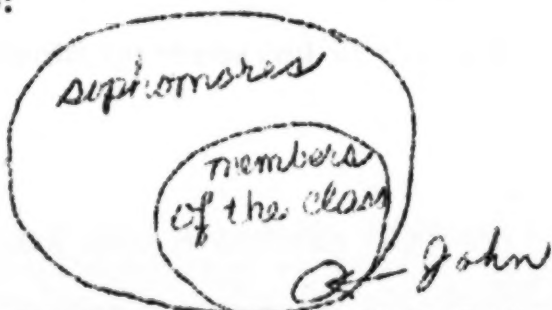
- C. Any member of this class is eligible to participate.

John is a member of this class.

Therefore John . . .

2. How are the first statements in these three examples alike? They are stated differently, but what do they have in common? What do the conclusions have in common? If the premises are true, are the conclusions true?

It may help you to think of the first premises as presenting sets like the sets you work with in mathematics, the second premises as presenting particular instances, and the conclusion as stating the decision whether the instance does or does not belong in the set. In A, the set "members of the class" is shown to belong to the set "those who are sophomores"; if John belongs to the class set, he also belongs to the sophomores set. You might picture it like this:



Patterns B and C are the same, though in C the larger set is "people who may participate."

In our reading and conversation we seldom find reasoning patterns set out like these in three clear statements put in order as first premise, second premise, and then conclusion. Frequently the pattern appears in statements like these:

1. Of course he like bones; he's a dog.
2. John must be a sophomore; he's in our class.
3. That milk has begun to sour; it won't taste good.
4. You will be tired tomorrow; you're sitting up too late.

Can you find the premises in each of these statements? First identify the conclusion in each one, and then see whether you can state the premises.

Finding the premises in these examples is not too difficult; in each you were working on the principle that what is true of the entire set is true of the particular instance. In each of these examples the first premise was not qualified; that is, it began with the determiner all (All dogs like bones; All the members of this class are sophomores). It didn't allow for any exceptions. What happens when the first premise is qualified? Suppose the first premise reads: Some members of this class are sophomores. Could you then be sure John is a sophomore even though he is a member of the class? What could you conclude? Now suppose the premise reads: Most of the members of the class are sophomores. How does this change the possibilities for conclusions? Is the possibility that John may be a sophomore any greater than it is if the first premise reads: Some members of the class are sophomores?

When you studied generalization in your lessons last year, you may remember, you learned to recognize probability in statements. You learned that not many general statements can be absolutely true or true of all instances; most reliable statements are concerned with what is probably true or possibly true, or likely to be true of most or some or a few instances. When the premises are qualified, or deal with probabilities, how is the conclusion affected? What can you conclude from each of the premises in the following examples? (Write the answers on a separate sheet. Do not write in this book.)

1. Students who misbehave in assembly should be punished.

Some students misbehaved in the assembly today.

Therefore

2. Most juniors take American History.

Mary is a junior.

Therefore

3. Plays that Mr. Brown directs are usually good.

Mr. Brown directed the play that we are going to see tonight.

Therefore

Can you also see the pattern when it is not presented in this order? In statements you hear or read you are more likely to find the reasoning expressed in such sentences as these:

1. Let's wait till summer to make our camping trip when the weather is better.

2. He's probably a Catholic; he's an Irishman.

3. This dress may be damaged; it's on half-price sale.

Can you identify the premises in these examples?

Problems in the reasoning pattern.

Unfortunately, reasoning is not always sound. Have you ever heard statements like these:

1. All sophomores are show-offs, and John is a sophomore; naturally, he's a show-off.

2. He must be rich; he drives a Cadillac.

3. The car ahead of us is going too fast; teenage driver, no doubt.
4. History courses are no good; I don't like studying history.
5. Jane is in the honors class; she must be an A student.
6. Caesar was a tyrant so he deserved to be killed.

If you do not accept the conclusions in these sentences, can you decide why they are faulty? Try to set them up as premises and conclusions and look carefully at the statements. Where is the problem in each one? Can you form any principles that help you decide how to evaluate a conclusion? If the conclusion is acceptable, what must be true of the first premise? or the second premise?

Even when you can accept both premises in a pattern of reasoning you may not be willing to accept the conclusion. Sometimes the problem is not in the premises themselves but in the relationship between the statements. Would you accept the conclusions in these patterns:

1. All dogs like bones; my cat also likes bones, therefore my cat must be a dog.
2. All the members of this class are sophomores; John is not a member of this class; therefore he must not be a sophomore.
3. He can't be rich; he drives an old Ford, and rich people always drive new cars.
4. All sophomores study biology and history; Greg studies biology and history, so he must be a sophomore.

EXERCISE

Write out the four sentences above in the form of a reasoning pattern with premises and conclusion.

Now look carefully at the statements. Can you explain why the conclusions are not acceptable?

II

Sometimes reasoning patterns depend on comparisons from which conclusions may be drawn. Instead of describing sets or presenting a general principle and fitting an instance to it they set forth analogies and imply that in similar situations the same principle holds true. Again the acceptability of the conclusion depends on the truth of the premises and the relationship between them. In the following examples, look for the analogy:

A. Washington High School in Hodad City has successfully financed student activities by charging each student a fee for an activity ticket.

Our school is like Washington High.

Therefore we can finance our student activities by charging each student a fee for an activity ticket.

B. Anyone who wants to play basketball well must understand the game and learn how to manage the ball.

Learning to play the piano is like learning to play basketball.

Therefore anyone who wants to play the piano well must understand music and develop his skill by practice.

In these reasoning patterns, where is the analogy stated? If the conclusions are true, must the premises also be true? Now look at two more patterns also based on analogy. If you do not accept the conclusions, can you explain why not?

We should not change horses in the middle of the stream.

Our country is in a crisis like that of a horseman crossing a stream.

Therefore we should reelect the President.

It is accepted practice for famous people to have autobiographies written for them by ghost writers.

Students who have papers assigned in a course are like people who want to publish autobiographies.

Therefore students should be allowed to turn in papers written for them by someone else.

The first of these two examples was used during World War II by various people urging the reelection of President Franklin D. Roosevelt; it might conceivably be used in times of crisis other than wars. Many people rejected this line of reasoning; if you reject the conclusion, are you objecting to the major premise, the minor premise, or both? If you object to the conclusion in the second example, which premises are you questioning?

If you reject the minor premise in a reasoning pattern based on analogy, you are saying, in effect, that the two situations are not really alike. The analogy, as you have already learned, is an extremely important pattern of reasoning. It cannot strictly be said to prove anything, but it can clarify ideas, and it can be highly persuasive. Can you form any general principles to test the reasoning in analogies?

EXERCISE: Problems in Reasoning

One of the most frequent problems in testing conclusions is that in spoken or written discourse, part of the reasoning pattern may not be stated. One premise may be omitted, or the reader may be left to infer the conclusion. Unfortunately, people do not always supply the missing premises and therefore do not recognize the flaw in the reasoning.

Supply the missing premise for each of the following and then evaluate the reasoning:

- A. He is old enough to fight; therefore he is old enough to vote.
- B. John is taking French 3; therefore he must have passed French 2.
- C. He'll know the answer; he's a teacher.
- D. He's a football player; he couldn't get 100 in that test without cheating.

Exercise 2

Accepting a negative conclusion from absence of evidence to support it is another problem. Which of the following statements do you think make this mistake:

- A. Nobody believes that the world is flat; I don't know anybody who does.
- B. People have tried for years to fly without an airplane; it can never be done.
- C. Nobody my age goes to bed at eleven o'clock; I shouldn't have to.
- D. Why do we have to hold basketball practice every afternoon? We haven't lost a game all year.

III

A third kind of reasoning pattern is so frequently necessary in decisions that we need to examine it. This is the reasoning that seeks to determine the cause or causes of events. If you can see the relationship between causes and results you can choose courses of action wisely. Here are some examples of happenings in which determining the cause might be helpful. See if you can decide what criteria for studying causes you can establish:

1. A group of students became violently ill after eating a meal in the same restaurant. Pat Brown had eaten a bowl of soup, a tuna salad sandwich, a milk shake, and some fruit salad. Jack Johnson had eaten fruit salad, creamed tuna on toast, and a glass of milk. Bill Brown had eaten an egg sandwich, a coke, and tuna salad. Ted Jones had eaten fruit salad, a milk shake, potato chips, and a tuna salad sandwich.

What appears to be the cause of the sudden indigestion? Can you be

sure of the cause? If not, what other possibilities might you investigate? What could you set up as a criterion for investigating possible causes?

2. On the same trip, Mike Jones, who has eaten a hamburger, potato chips, fruit salad, and a milk shake, did not become sick. What added weight does this information give to your hypothesis? What criteria could you establish here?

3. On Thursday, when themes were due, Paul told the teacher that he could not turn in his paper because someone had held him up with a gun on the way to school and taken his paper from him. He would need more time to write the paper again. The teacher rejected his explanation as fantastic, and said she would have to penalize him for turning in a late paper. Would you agree with the teacher? What other possible causes would you want to investigate?

4. In a discussion of why Huck Finn ran away from his father, one student said that because Huck ran away at the same time as Jim, it was obvious that he went because Jim had persuaded him. Another student contended that Huck left home to go down the river because he and Tom Sawyer had become wealthy. What cautions should you observe in assigning causes and effects?

5. Every night, now, I used to slip ashore, towards ten o'clock, at some little village, and buy ten or fifteen cents' worth of meal or bacon or other stuff to eat; and sometimes I lifted a chicken that warn't roosting comfortable, and took him along. Pap always said, take a chicken when you get a chance, because if you don't want him yourself you can easy find somebody that does, and a good deed ain't ever forgot. I never see pap when he didn't want the chicken himself, but that is what he used to say, anyway.

Mornings, before daylight, I slipped into corn fields and borrowed a watermelon, or a mushmelon, or a punkin, or some new corn, or things of that kind. Pap always said it warn't no harm to borrow things, if you was meaning to pay them back, sometime; but the widow said it warn't anything but a soft name for stealing, and no decent body would do it. Jim said he reckoned the widow was partly right and pap was partly right; so the best way would be for us to pick out two or three things from the list and say we wouldn't borrow them any more--then he reckoned it wouldn't be no harm to borrow the others. So we talked it over all one night, drifting along down the river, trying to make up our minds whether to drop the watermelons, or the catelopes, or the mushmelons, or what. But towards daylight we got it all settled satisfactory, and concluded to drop crabapples and p'simmons. We warn't feeling just right, before that, but it was all comfortable now. I was glad the way it come out, too, because crabapples ain't ever good, and the p'simmons wouldn't be ripe for two or three months yet.

Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

What cause does Huck give for the decisions he and Jim made? Supply his missing causes. What is the difference between rational thinking and rationalizing?

6. A boy running for a class office said that he should be elected because he would see that the class would do away with money raising drives and that the class would spend more money on the junior prom. What incongruity in his causes should cause his classmates to be suspicious of him?

ASSIGNMENT FOR WRITING

You have examined three kinds of reasoning patterns that people use constantly in making decisions or arriving at conclusions. In each, you have seen that it is important to recognize the assumptions on which inferences or conclusions are arrived at. You have seen that these patterns are used every day, and that they appear in speaking and writing; you can see this even more clearly if you think back over some of the literature you have read. In Julius Caesar, for example, Shakespeare's characters use these same reasoning patterns to decide what they want to do or think they ought to do. This assignment will give you an opportunity to examine some of the reasoning that leads to action in the play. As you read the following examples, look for the premises and the conclusions. Remember that sometimes the premises are not actually stated; you may have to supply one, or you may have to supply the conclusion.

Here are some examples of reasoning from principle and instance:

1. Cassius says to Brutus:

Men at some time are masters of their fates.

The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars,

But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

2. Caesar says of Cassius:

Such men as he be never at heart's ease

Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,

And therefore are they very dangerous.

3. Caesar says of Cassius:

Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;

He thinks too much, such men are dangerous.

Here are some examples of reasoning by analogy:

4. Brutus says of Caesar:

But 'tis a common proof

That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,

Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;

But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may.

5. Brutus says to Cassius:

Our legions are brimful, our cause is ripe.
The enemy increaseth every day;
We, at the height, are ready to decline.
There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves
Or lose our ventures.

Here is an example of reasoning by cause and effect:

6. Cassius says to Casca:

And why should Caesar be a tyrant then?
Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf
But that he sees the Romans are but sheep;
He were no lion were not Romans hinds.

Preparation for Writing

Now that you know something about reasoning, you may be able to decide whether the men speaking are arriving at justifiable conclusions based on acceptable premises. Choose the example that you find most interesting and write it out as a complete reasoning pattern. Supply the premises if any are missing, and state the conclusion the speaker had reached. Then see whether you think the conclusion is justified. You should be able to explain in a short paper why you believe it is, or is not.

Writing the Paper

In order to explain your opinion and support it, you will need to review your reasons carefully. Do you find the premises acceptable? Can you explain why or why not? Are the premises related so that the conclusion follows? When you are sure of your reasons, write your paper to explain your ideas. Make the reasons as clear as possible; use examples where you need them. Reread your paper when you have finished to catch mechanical errors. If time permits, you may be able to read and discuss the papers in class.

Lesson 3: Facts

Each decision that people make presents different problems. Although problems requiring decisions vary greatly, among the most frequent are problems of fact (what is true?); problems of value and value-judgment (what is valuable or important?); and problems of policy (what should we do?). You may profit from looking at each kind of problem separately, though some decisions combine two or more of the types. Many times people argue over facts that are clearly established and can be easily checked, such as whether a school won its opening football game five years ago. Although you may have fun trying to deduce the answer by remembering that this was the year you lost every game and therefore must have lost this one, really these questions call for little effort in problem solving on anyone's part; the quickest and most sensible way to solve the problem is to stop arguing and check your yearbook to see what is correct. Sometimes you may need to make decisions that involve both fact and value judgment. For example, a jury trying to decide whether Madame X was guilty of murder in the first degree would need to go through the following steps:

Anyone of sound mind who kills another person with malice aforethought is guilty of murder in the first degree.

Madame X, of sound mind and with malice aforethought, killed Mr. Y.

Therefore Madame X is guilty of murder in the first degree.

If you were the district attorney:

1. Which statement would you expect the members of the jury to accept most readily?
2. Which statement sets forth the conclusion?
3. Where would the burden of the district attorney's proof lie?

If you were the defense attorney:

4. What possible kinds of defense could you investigate? Examine the second premise. What three parts could you prove or disprove? What two qualifiers

of the subject noun phrase can you identify? Could these two parts be proved or disproved conclusively?

5. What parts of the second premise could you prove or disprove with facts?
6. Which decisions would rest on opinion?

I.

Everyone would probably agree on two points: 1) If Madame X had not been in town at the time of the murder, or 2) if a murder had not been committed, she could hardly be guilty of the crime. These facts may be establishable. Questions of this sort are constantly being disputed in law courts, and decisions are made by juries on problems of this kind.

The danger in questions of fact is jumping to conclusions or misinterpreting the facts. Everyone has probably read mystery stories in which fictional detectives deduce what has happened from the details he has observed or the facts he has established. The following passage from the Sherlock Holmes mystery, "The Speckled Band," by A. Conan Doyle shows the famous detective at work. As you read it, see whether you find his conclusions reasonable:

"You must not fear," said he, soothingly, bending forward and petting her forearm. "We shall soon set matters right. I have no doubt. You have come in by train this morning, I see."

"You know me, then?"

"No, but I observe the second half of a return ticket in the palm of your left glove. You must have started early, and yet you had a good drive in a dog-cart, along heavy roads, before you reached the station."

The lady gave a violent start, and stared in bewilderment at my companion.

"There is no mystery, my dear madame," said he, smiling. "The left arm of your jacket is spattered with mud in no less than seven places. The marks are perfectly fresh. There is no vehicle save a dog-cart which throws up mud in that way, then only when you sit on the left-hand side of the driver."

Do Holmes's conclusions sound sensible to you, or is he leaving out other possible explanations of details? Has the author made the situation seem plausible?

You might like to think over the kind of deductions made by your favorite book or TV detective. Does he work from unlikely assumptions or jump to conclusions?

We reason about questions of fact more often than we realize; we accept or reject items presented to us as facts, and we accept or reject conclusions based on them. Advertising, for example, bombards us with "facts" about products to convince us that we should buy. When should we believe and when should we not? When should we accept the conclusion and when resist? Consider these advertisements, and see what you think:

1. He couldn't take his eyes off yours all evening. Lite-Glo Eye Make-Up made the brilliance of your eyes an exciting fact--the delicate tones of eye shadow, the soft dark gleam of Lite-Glo jet on your lashes picked up the special you-ness of your personality and made it sparkle. Gave you confidence. He didn't know how you made your eyes so expressive. You could have told him, but you didn't. You just looked back at him, and the flattery of Lite-Glo Eye Make-Up kept your eyes shining all evening. . .

2. Come and look. See these impressive leather bags with your American eyes. They're worth seeing--not just because you'll like the sophisticated color tones, the kind of American stylishness you appreciate. It's more than that. You'll feel proud. Red white and blue proud. Nowhere else in the world can you see luggage like this. Genuine leather. Solid brass fastenings. Expert tooling. Finished seams. Every detail shows American perfection of craftsmanship--American care is what makes owning or giving Adams luggage so much more exciting, so much more satisfying. Visit your Adams dealer. He has the newest fashions in all leather goods. Look at them with your American eyes. You'll see beauty in every line.

How much is fact in these advertisements? What conclusions are you expected to draw? Do you think they are justified? For what reasons are you asked to buy Lite-Glo Eye Make-Up or Adams luggage? Are the "facts" informing or misleading the reader?

EXERCISE

Bring to class an advertisement that asks you to draw a conclusion and be prepared to explain to the class whether the conclusion is justified. If the ad is misleading, you should plan to explain why.

Sometimes writers purposely use faulty reasoning in questions of fact to create humor. The selection by Robert Benchley that follows goes amusingly astray. Even though you will undoubtedly recognize that the author arrives at an unacceptable conclusion, how he leads you there is not so readily apparent. See if you can find the error in Benchley's reasoning.

"Do Insects Think?"

by Robert Benchley

(For text, see "Do Insects Think?" by Robert Benchley from The Benchley Roundup, selected by Nathan Benchley; Harper & Row, New York, 1922.)

STUDY QUESTIONS

Substance

1. What does Benchley say is the purpose of this article?
2. For what possible reasons does Benchley give human characteristics to the wasp?
3. What errors in causal reasoning do you find?
4. At the end of the article Benchley says, "If this is not an answer to Professor Bouvier's statement that insects have no reasoning power, I do not know what is." What is Benchley's first premise? What is the second premise? What is his conclusion? Where does the reasoning go astray?
5. In the final paragraph, how does Benchley twist the meaning of Professor Bouvier's original statement?

Structure

1. In what order do events occur in the article?
2. How does the reference to the treatise help Benchley's structure in the article?

3. What action of Benchley's did the wasp repeat?
4. How is the close of the article related to the opening?

Style

1. What is the dominant tone of the article?
2. Much of the humor arises from incongruity, over-simplification, and understatement. What examples of each of these do you find in the selection?
3. What words and phrases appear to give Benchley's writing an air of authority? What qualifiers help to suggest careful scholarship?

OPTIONAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Some members of the class might be interested in creating and solving a mystery. Suppose that you have just moved into an old house and at the back of one of the closets you have discovered a box containing the following items:

- a bundle of letters with a yellowed telegram on top
- a torn picture
- a withered rose
- a tattered theater program
- a heavy, old-fashioned locket with a blue stone

See how many of these items you can weave into your story.

Lesson 4: Value Judgments

As you have already seen, many decisions require more than a scrutiny of the facts; you must often make some sort of evaluation--judge the importance or worth of an activity, or an object, or a person. Anyone who must make a decision based on a value-judgment must either set up his own criteria for measuring worth or else accept criteria already set up by someone else.

In the following selection you can follow the reasoning of a writer as he discusses a problem of values and offers the solution he thinks should be accepted. See whether you accept his assumptions, and his criteria for judging values.

"What Does Violence Say About Man?"

by Joseph Wood Krutch

(For text, see "What Does Violence Say About Man?",
Saturday Review, March 24, 1965, pp. 18-19.)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Substance:

In following Krutch's reasoning about scientific experiments in education, you may find it helpful to put the arguments into reasoning patterns. If you work out the answers to the following questions in writing, remember to use a separate sheet. Do not write in the book.

1. Krutch questions the reasoning of some science teachers and laboratory physiologists in America. Can you see the process he says they are using? If you arrange the premises and the conclusion in a pattern, what would be the second premise:

Today in America any cruelty seems justified if it can be said to be done in the interests of science.

(Second Premise). . .

Biological starvation kits may be justified as educational.

2. He attacks this reasoning in a number of ways:

A. What is the effect of bringing in the references to Charles Darwin and Thomas Huxley? How does this help his attack?

B. In paragraph 4 Krutch uses an argument that can be stated in the pattern of premises and conclusion. See if you can supply its first premise:

(First premise). . .

Some laboratory workers might have a touch of sadism or be callous because of familiarity with suffering.

Therefore some bill regulating the treatment of laboratory animals should be passed.

C. He also argues that American biologists should not feel hampered by controls. What is the second premise in this reasoning pattern:

English biologists do not consider themselves hampered by the policy of licensing possibly painful experiments.

(Second premise).

Therefore American scientists should not feel hampered by similar controls.

D. What does Krutch gain by including the names of the four English fellows?

E. What premise does Krutch say any experimenter should be able to support before starting any experiment requiring vivisection?

3. Is Krutch opposed to all vivisection? What is his position?
4. What values does Krutch think have changed throughout history? How have men changed in what they consider important or necessary?
5. What value-judgments of modern society does Krutch make?

Structure

1. How does Krutch make clear the relationship between paragraph 1 and paragraph 2?
2. How is paragraph 10 related to paragraph 1?

Style

1. What is the effect of the opening paragraph? How does the author use this effect to advantage in the next paragraph?
2. In what ways are the two situations alike? How are they different?
3. Why does the author put the word educational in quotation marks in paragraph 2?
4. What reasons can you see for including the quotation from "The Ancient Mariner"? What is the tone of the refutation that Krutch imagines a student might make to this question? What effect does the author get by using the word critters?
5. What effect does he get by using of course and but in paragraph 4? or perhaps, in the last line of paragraph 10?

ASSIGNMENT FOR WRITING

You have explored value-judgments of people in the first part of this unit and value-judgments of society in this lesson. The same principles you may have discovered in considering what is valuable and what is important can be applied to familiar subjects. You can profit from applying them in evaluating something you have observed for yourself. You might consider one of the programs in your school--the activities of the student council, or one of your school clubs. Or you may select an activity or a custom of your family that you think is important. See if you can explain in your paper why the

activity you have selected is valuable, and how it reflects attitudes in the students that are worthy and important. You may, if you like, take a stand like Krutch's and explain why the activity is not valuable--why the attitudes it reflects are not worthy and should not be approved. As you plan your paper, think through your reasons carefully; check the assumptions you are making about what is valuable. Then explain as clearly as you can. Remember to proofread your paper carefully for mechanical errors before you turn it in.

Questions of value, as you have seen in the Krutch essay, frequently lead naturally into discussions of policy. If an activity is valuable, we may imply or positively state that it should be put into action, or perhaps be enlarged and improved. If an activity is not valuable, we often go on to suggest that it should be discontinued or changed.

What policy is Krutch advocating? Has he directly stated what he thinks should be done, or does he imply the action he thinks should be taken? How does his discussion of values suggest the policy he believes would be proper?

In discussions about what is best to do, you may often find statements using if-then: if we do this, then we may expect- - -. Which of the modal auxiliaries would you expect to find in the then statement? can? should? will?

Krutch does not use if-then statements to advocate a policy directly, but his idea might be put into such a sentence. See if you can construct it. What would the if statement be? What would the then statements be? Now try making the if statement negative: If we do not adopt this policy- - -; and construct the then statements. How are the then statements different?

OPTIONAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Remembering what we have said about values and policy, convert your last paper on values into a discussion of policy; explain what ought to be done about the problem you discussed, and give your reasons.

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

INTRODUCTION

What is real and what is true? Where do you find reality and where do you look for truth? Being honest is always and often a difficult task. What is the standard that is necessary to be able to do this?

In the busy-busy of daily affairs you may not have had time to consider the why you accept one statement rather than another. To find out more about this with your family and friends, the purpose of this book, the steps you have taken, the books you have read and all that they mean. The book is for you, who are prepared with an understanding of the world as it is, and who are prepared to face it with a realistic and honest eye. This book is for you, who are prepared to face it with a realistic and honest eye.

IT RINGS TRUE

(A Unit on Plausibility)

Rhetoric Curriculum IV

Student Version

INTRODUCTION

What is real and what is true? Where do you find reality and where do you look for truth? Some ideas we accept and others we reject. What is the standard that influences us to choose?

In the hurly-burly of daily affairs you may not have had time to examine why you accept one statement rather than another. Your past experiences with your family and friends, the places you've been, the sights you have seen, the books you have read have all had their impact. Whenever you are presented with an unfamiliar idea you accept or reject it according to how it relates to that inner measuring stick, your own collected store of truth and reality.

Perhaps it is only when you are alone with an idea--and this may be sometimes when you are quietly reading a book--that you have time to examine the ways in which the use of language makes you accept or reject it. You may accept a new idea because a writer has skillfully built upon ideas already familiar to you or because he has so organized the details, structured the sentences, or chosen the words that you can sense the ring of truth in the new thought being developed.

In this unit you will have an opportunity to examine ways in which writers have presented unfamiliar ideas to their readers, some by recreating the past and others by projecting the future.

LESSON I

When Marchette Chute's Shakespeare of London was published some years ago, it was hailed as a book which revealed many interesting things about Shakespeare's London and Shakespeare's theater. To accomplish this task was no mean feat, for actual records of the theater of the time were not at all plentiful and records of Shakespeare the man almost nonexistent. It was necessary, therefore, to piece together many bits of information to arrive at an approximation of the truth.

Read now the two following excerpts from Marchette Chute's Shakespeare of London, and prepare the answers to the questions for study.

(For text, see Shakespeare of London, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1949; p. 67 beginning with "A young man up from the country would. . ." and ending on p. 70 with ". . . satisfy the greatest theatre-going public in the world.")

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

Substance

1. What were the means by which the Londoners entertained themselves?
2. What influence did their taste in entertainment have on the kind of theater produced for their enjoyment?
3. Find the specific references the author has used to document her statements.
4. What kinds of documents were probably consulted in order to build this "mosaic" of London life in the 1580's?

Structure and Style

1. Suggest a title that you consider appropriate for this passage.
2. What does the purpose of the first paragraph seem to be? (Remember that this selection has been taken from a longer work.) Find the ten-word statement pointing to the thought developed in this particular selection.
3. How has the author used paragraph indentations to assist the reader in following the thought?
4. What two words, appearing in every paragraph, serve as a means of tying the subject matter together?

5. Paragraphs 2, 3, 6, and 7 all contain words associated with the theater. List them. How does the choice of these words help to promote the author's purpose?
6. Suppose that the author had chosen to use the "young man up from the country" (the he of the first paragraph) as a link between paragraphs. Would this have been acceptable, or is the writing better as it stands?
7. What two general statements are made about the London theater in paragraph 8? Where are these sentences placed in the paragraph? Where are the specific details that develop the general statements? How does the sentence structure help you to see the details supporting each statement?
8. Why do you think the discussion of plays has been left until last? What effect is created in paragraph 8 by bringing together ideas developed in previous paragraphs?
9. The point of view of a writer toward his subject is often shown by the way he writes about it. As Marchette Chute reports the entertainments enjoyed by the Londoners of Shakespeare's time, does she take a definite attitude toward these pleasures? Does approval or disapproval or any other attitude seem to be implied in her choice of words or the way she puts them together?
10. What qualities in this writing make you believe that this is the way things were in Shakespeare's time?

EXERCISE

Suppose a historian in the future were to try to reconstruct our own day. What records would be available to him? Select a subject which your imaginary historian might choose to pursue: the impact of sports on the economy of the 1960's; the Russian and American race in space; the importance of television in American life; the development of abstract or pop art; the rise of professional football. Determine what sources the historian might consult. (It might help you to think of the kinds of records that are kept today: business and legal transactions, news, etc. You might also find it profitable to consult the reference section of your library to skim through the various reference books and note the kinds of information available.) Write a short paper in which you discuss the sources you have discovered.

"The Actor in Shakespeare's Time

by Marchette Chute

(For text, see Shakespeare of London; *ibid.*; beginning on p. 86 with "Acting was not an easy profession. . ." and ending on p. 89 with ". . . of the play as a whole.")

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

Substance

1. What demands did the Elizabethan stage put upon the actor?
2. Why was it difficult to make stabbings and deaths convincing on the Elizabethan stage?
3. What were the two basic qualifications of the actor?
4. Why do you think the author devotes so much space to the fencing matches, duels, and violent deaths?
5. What specific references indicate that the author had done considerable research before organizing the statement on the actor?

Structure and Style

1. What necessary skills of the actor mentioned in paragraph 1 are later developed more fully, each in an entire paragraph?
2. The stage production problem discussed at length in paragraph 5 was first introduced as a single statement in paragraph 1. Find the statement.
3. In paragraphs 1 and 2 find other word groups reiterating the statement that acting was "not an easy profession."
4. How is the general thesis mentioned in question 3 kept alive in subsequent paragraphs? Find specific references.
5. In this selection, the author is concentrating on the subject of the actor's training, but has not forgotten that this is only a part of the larger subject being developed in Shakespeare of London. Find the statements pointing to this larger subject, and notice how the author manages to keep this subject before the reader while developing the particular subject at hand.

6. Why do you think the information in paragraph 7 is used at this point? Could it have been used earlier or is it more effective here? Why?
7. Why does the author choose to discuss last the need for a good voice? How has she used the long discussion of acrobatics, fencing, and death scenes to emphasize this requirement?
8. In paragraph 2, and again in paragraph 4, the author uses a verb phrase structure less definite and less authoritative than the other verb phrases used in the same paragraph. In paragraph 7 the same structure is used in a similar situation. Find the verb phrases. Why was the use of this phrase structure necessary? Does the use of this phrase give you more, or less, confidence in the author as a creator of an authentic historical past?
9. Another expression used twice in paragraph 7 accomplishes the same purpose as the verb phrase in question 4. What is the expression?

EXERCISE

Imagine that you are an actor in Shakespeare's day, an actor playing a series of minor roles in the play Julius Caesar. Study the play to determine how many roles you might possibly be assigned to play in one afternoon. Then write a short account of your activities as the play is presented. In writing your account, use either first or third person point of view.

Here are some questions to assist you in making your choice of characters to play:

1. What scenes might you appear in? (Consider the time required to change your costume and to pick up any portable stage properties. You might also consider what simple changes could be made in a basic costume if you were pressed for time.)
2. How could you alternate the playing of non-speaking parts--that of a messenger, a guard, a servant, or an onlooker--with the acting of minor roles in which speech and definite character portrayal would be necessary?
3. Are there any minor roles you feel should not be played by the same actor even if it were possible to do so as far as the time element is concerned?

ASSIGNMENT FOR WRITING

Now project yourself ahead in time and assume that you are a historian trying to reconstruct the present age. Your business is to record, with sufficient evidence to make your findings plausible, how the age in which we are now living was.

In carrying out this assignment you have an advantage over Marchette Chute--you know how things are today, and all you need to do is select the details that suit your purpose, use past tense, and include enough evidence to make your account plausible to your hypothetical readers.

Here are some suggestions for development:

- Amusements--football games, motion pictures
- Education of the young
- Eating habits
- Transportation in the city
- Styles of dress
- Homes and home life
- Hair styles of the 1960's
- Characteristics of the entertainer
- Health and medicine
- Concerns of teen-agers

After you have selected and limited your subject, you will need to state your attitude toward it, a thesis you can support. The next step will be to look at the evidence available to you in developing your thesis. Suppose your thesis is Clothing and fashion were important to the people of the 1960's. Where would you find materials to support your conclusions? There would, of course, be advertisements, pictures, and articles in the periodicals of the times. Motion pictures of the period could be a possible source of evidence. Reports on new miracle fabrics from scientific journals might support the thesis. Current commentary by people deploring the fashions of the day might also be used. To support another thesis, In many households, preparing food was a simple, easy affair, one could draw on the figures showing the growth of the frozen food industry or on a report of the number of portable barbecues sold in any given area during the period. These illustrations, of course, are offered only as examples. The evidence you decide to use in your paper will depend upon your choice of a thesis. Although you are not writing a research paper where every statement is documented, you should provide enough actual instances to make the rest of your statements believable.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REVISION

After you have set your ideas down on paper, see what you can do to improve the organization and structure of your work. Remember the principles that you identified in the discussion of the London entertainments and try to apply them to your writing.

1. Can a word or phrase perform the same function for you as London and Londoner did for Marchette Chute?
2. Have you organized your writing so that related things are put together as skillfully as they are in the models?
3. Have you shown by transitional words and phrases the relationship between the parts?
4. Does your finished paper bring a message to the reader, a message that could be stated in a single sentence? Does your title suggest your message?

ASSIGNMENT FOR WRITING

You have studied several re-creations of the past. In the process of examining these materials, you have observed some of the techniques used by writers in bringing to life places and people of times now gone.

In the following assignment you are asked to try your hand at this sort of writing. Perhaps you would like to put yourself in the place of a Roman citizen and share your admiration of Caesar with your readers. You may fancy yourself to be a Greek soldier in the Trojan horse, waiting and wondering, evaluating every little creak and thump, every Trojan curse and comment, endlessly calculating your chances of survival. Or you may prefer to reconstruct a period closer to the present day: to let your reader share the experiences of your grandfather as a young man newly come as an immigrant from the Old Country.

The possibilities are limitless:

- Your mother's first day at school
- A climber ascending Mt. Everest
- A diver discovering a Byzantine wreck at the bottom of the sea
- A diver beset by a shark in tropical waters
- A university student deciding to join the Peace Corps
- A football player on the bench hoping to enter the game

Before beginning to write your first draft, consider some of the possible approaches to the subject. You may choose to use the first person point of view, either in a straight-forward account or in a letter or diary. On the other hand, presenting your material in the third person may be more to your liking. Be sure you have a reason for choosing the point of view you decide on, some advantage that such a point of view will give you as you write. Consider, also, the necessity of squaring your account with the facts and historical records available.

REVISING THE FIRST DRAFT

After you have written your first draft, reread your paper to see whether you have made your account plausible.

1. If you have made references to a particular time, place, or historical personage, have you checked to see that these facts are authentic?
2. Have you used any of the following methods to give your writing a sense of reality:
 - a. Specific details
 - b. Direct quotations
 - c. Emotional reactions of persons involved

Study your paper also to see whether you have tied your material together by using structural devices.

LESSON 3

Most scientific discoveries have been heralded as forerunners of a new and more splendid age, an age in which the aspirations of mankind will eventually be realized. What kind of life man will live in a future age, most of us can imagine only vaguely. Many writers, however, have taken excursions into the future, forecasting everything from a "brave new world" to dire catastrophe. The following selection is one writer's picture of the future of mankind if present-day trends continue.

"The Portable Phonograph"

by Walter Van Tilburg Clark

(For text, see "The Portable Phonograph" in The Watchful God and Other Stories; Random House, New York, 1950; beginning on p. 179 with "The red sunset, with narrow. . ." and ending on p. 188 with ". . . comfortable piece of lead pipe.")

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

Substance

1. At what time of year do the events of this story occur? In what part of the world?
2. What furnishings does Doctor Jenkins have in his cave? How had he obtained them?
3. Why are the men living as they are? Support your answer with clues from the story.
4. How old are these men?
5. What do you learn about the education and background of these men?
6. Have you any idea why the man who wants to write suggests that "New York" be played?
7. Can you think of a reason why the musician prefers Debussy?
8. How is the musician's appreciation of the music different from that of the others? Can you explain why the musician does not thank Doctor Jenkins?
9. Why does Doctor Jenkins leave the phonograph open?
10. Do you think there is a reason why at least one of the men does not offer to play host at their next meeting?
11. Why has the author chosen not to tell us in detail of the events that have preceded the incident he is relating?
12. Is there any reference to man's way of life as a cause for this present state of affairs? If so, where is it?

13. In the paragraph next to the last, the doctor is described as "peering and listening." Why is he listening so intently?
14. In the last paragraph, study all the references to the canvas door. What significance do you attach to these?
15. What is the significance of the last sentence of the story?
16. Does the author of this story leave you with the impression that these are the last men on earth? If not, what other possibilities are suggested in the story?
17. What are the elements in this story that make you accept it?

Structure and Style

1. Which two of the men do we see most clearly? Select the details that enable us to see them. Why didn't the author give all the men names? Why didn't he describe them all in detail? What adjective does the author use to describe the man who wanted to write? (He uses the same word to form a manner adverb.)
2. What words in the first paragraph set the mood of the story? What is this mood? What references throughout the story maintain the same mood? (Consider, for instance, the flight of the geese and the howl of the wolf.)
3. What musical terms are used to describe the selection played? What other words has the author used to describe the music?
4. The author compares Doctor Jenkins to a "prehistoric priest performing a fateful ceremonial rite." When does he make this comparison? Make a list of references that continue this comparison.
5. What do you notice about the paragraphing and punctuation of some of the conversation? Why has the author paragraphed and punctuated in this way?
6. What is the NP of almost every sentence in the last paragraph? Why has the author used this NP?
7. Where has the author discussed setting? Why has he chosen to discuss it at this point? Is the season of the year significant? Is the region significant? Would the tropics have served the author's purpose as well?
8. There are three parts in this story. What is accomplished in each?
9. Would "The Phonograph" be as good a title as "The Portable Phonograph"? Why or why not?

10. Suppose the author had ended with the lines: "Come again," he invited, "in a week. We will have the 'New York'." How would the effect of the story have been different?

Purpose

By now you are aware that the author is using this story to convey several ideas. Which of these ideas does he make most important?

After giving this question some thought, write a paragraph or two explaining your point of view and making specific references to the story in support of your viewpoint.

LESSON 4

PART A

"The Reading Machine"

by Morris Bishop

(For text, see "The Reading Machine" by Morris Bishop in The New Yorker Magazine, March 4, 1947; beginning on p. 37 with "I have invented a reading machine. . ." and ending with ". . .batting machine, obviously," said Professor Entwhistle.")

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

Substance

1. What present-day trends in society may have suggested the subject to the author?
2. To what group of readers does this seem to be directed? (To what group of readers would the situation and the setting be most familiar?)
3. What does Professor Entwhistle's reading machine accomplish? How is his definition of reading different from yours?
4. The entire essay is developed upon an absurd analogy. What is it? What other false analogies do you find?
5. In support of his machine, Professor Entwhistle says that "the student doesn't remember what he reads now." Why isn't this argument sound? What other example of unsound reasoning not previously mentioned can you find?
6. Do you believe that such a machine could be constructed? Why or why not?
7. Look up the word amphibology. With the meaning of this word as a clue, what do you think would be the status of departments such as Bio-Economics and Business Psychology (Retail)?
8. The professors of the department mentioned in the previous question took enough interest in the machine to make comments. What is their reaction? What is the reaction of the professors who made no comments? What is implied by the reaction of the professors who made no comments?

STRUCTURE AND STYLE

1. What framework has the author used to tell his story? How is this framework useful in making the idea clear?
2. Reread the opening sentence. In addition to getting the main idea before us, what else does the author accomplish?
3. Point to specific ways in which the author maintains the tone he sets in the first sentence.
4. Can you find other places where the author might have ended his writing? Where are they? What is gained by including the additional material?

PURPOSE

Considering the kind of reader to whom this is directed, what is the author's purpose in writing this? What point or points is he trying to make? State them briefly.

PART B

"Shunpiking on the Moon"

by W. K. Miksch

"The first round trip to the moon will be a week-long journey. . . Later stays will be longer when we are able to provide. . . what every traveler needs away from home--a motel room and a you-drive-it-car."

--Dr. Wernher von Braun

(For text of "Shunpiking on the Moon", see The Atlantic Monthly, 215 ; March, 1965; beginning on p. 176 with "The 'fun capital' of the moon is. . . ." and ending on p. 177 with ". . . take any wooden drogues!")

ASSIGNMENT FOR WRITING

You have read three pieces of writing revealing possibilities that may lie in the future--if present trends are any indication of that future.

Do you ever imagine the world of tomorrow? Is your view of the future as gloomy as that presented by Mr. Clark, or do you envision a better future for man? Based on present scientific developments and present trends, what future do you foresee? What changes do you hope will come to pass? What personal dreams would you like to see fulfilled?

Keeping your feet placed on the firm ground of present scientific knowledge--automation, the whole gamut of machines and their infinite possibilities, advances in medicine, architecture, and food production--how do you see the future? Perhaps you would like to focus on a particular situation, as the author of "Shunpiking on the Moon" does in discussing the expansion of tourism. Or you may prefer to point to the ridiculous extremes to which the pursuit of automation may lead. Some of the ideas below may be suggestive to you of a theme for development, or you may think of another that you can expand more readily. Here are some starting points for your thinking:

Schools of the future
Babysitting
Baseball in 2500
House of tomorrow
Clothes
Fishing on the moon
Tailored by automat

Housecleaning
The dog of tomorrow
Teenagers of the next century
Boy "dates" girl in 2000 A. D.
New bodies for old
The theme machine

Before beginning to write, think over all you have learned about putting the stamp of authenticity on a piece of writing. Give some attention to the possibilities of form: a diary, a letter, a journal, an official record, or even a first person narrative. Remember, also, the contributions that conversations, descriptive detail, and the reports of witnesses can make to your account.

You will recall that a logical, easily discernible pattern will enable your reader to follow your thought and to accept what you have to say as plausible.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REVISION

After you have written your first draft, you should give some thought to revising it. Since this is probably your last major piece of writing this year, it should reflect your growth in the ability to use good principles of thought, structure, and word selection. The following questions point particularly to principles emphasized in this unit:

1. Do you have a clearly-established purpose in your writing?
2. Have you organized your material so that it is easy for a reader to follow your thought?

3. Have you given your writing a sense of reality by choosing the exact details needed? Have you included enough of the familiar so that your reader will be able to accept the unfamiliar aspects you are including?
4. Have you shown by transitional words and phrases the relationship between the parts?
5. Can a word or phrase accomplish for you what the word tourist and its synonyms did for the author of "Shunpiking on the Moon"?